

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5412

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 12115

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP, SEATO

SUBJECT: SEATO: SECGEN CALLS ON PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY
OF STATE

1. SEATO SECGEN SUNTHORN HONGLADAROM HAS SOLICITED MY HELP IN ARRANGING COURTESY CALLS ON THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY OF STATE PRIOR TO THE SEATO COUNCIL REPS AND COUNCIL MEETING IN NYC SCHEDULED TO BEGIN SEPTEMBER 26.

2. IT IS STANDARD PRACTICE AND CUSTOM FOR A SEATO SECGEN, FOLLOWING HIS ASSUMPTION OF OFFICE, TO MAKE OFFICIAL VISITS TO THE MEMBER COUNTRIES AND CALL ON THE HEADS OF GOVERNMENTS. SECGEN SUNTHORN, WHO ASSUMED OFFICE LAST SEPTEMBER, OFFICIALLY VISITED THE PHILIPPINES LAST NOVEMBER AND CALLED ON PRESIDENT MARCOS. IN JANUARY OF THIS YEAR HE MADE OFFICIAL VISITS TO BOTH THE UK AND FRANCE. HE CALLED ON PM HEATH BUT FRENCH PRESIDENT WAS UNAVAILABLE DUE TO HIS CAMPAIGNING FOR THE FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS. THE SECGEN HAS NOT YET MADE HIS OFFICIAL VISITS TO AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND.

3. THE SECGEN, IN THE INTEREST OF ECONOMY, HAS HELD OFF HIS OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE US UNTIL HIS PRESENCE WAS REQUIRED AT THE 18TH COUNCIL MEETING. HIS DEPARTURE FOR THE US WOULD BE DEPENDENT ON A DATE THE PRESIDENT WOULD BE AVAILABLE TO RECEIVE HIM. THE SECGEN'S TENTATIVE PLANS CALL FOR HIM TO ARRIVE IN WASHINGTON, D.C., SEPTEMBER 19 AND, IF POSSIBLE, HE WOULD PREFER, AT THE CONVENIENCE OF THE PRESIDENT, TO CALL
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ON HIM SOMETIME DURING PERIOD SEPTEMBER 21 THRU 25 SINCE

HE MUST BE IN NYC FOR THE COUNCIL REPS MEETING SEPTEMBER 26.

4. FOLLOWING A CALL ON THE PRESIDENT, THE SEC GEN, ALSO IN KEEPING WITH NORMAL PRACTICE, REQUESTS A BRIEF CALL ON THE SECRETARY PRIOR TO THE COUNCIL MEETING. THIS COULD TAKE PLACE IN WASHINGTON OR NEW YORK, DEPENDING ON SECRETARY'S CONVENIENCE. SINCE THE US IS HOST FOR THE MEETING, HE SHOULD CALL ON THE US COUNCIL MEMBER BEFORE CALLING ON THE OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS.

5. I STRONGLY URGE THAT ARRANGEMENTS BE MADE FOR THESE CALLS REQUESTED BY THE SEC GEN. ALTHOUGH I REALIZE THAT THEY ARE BASICALLY OF A PROTOCOL NATURE AND THAT THE DEMANDS ON THE PRESIDENT'S AND SECRETARY'S TIMES ARE UNDULY HEAVY, THE CALLS ARE STANDARD PROCEDURE FOR A SEATO SEC GEN. MOREOVER, I BELIEVE THAT OUR REFUSAL TO ACCEDE TO HIS REQUESTS WOULD BE INTERPRETED AS EVIDENCE OF WAVERING SUPPORT FOR OUR COMMITMENT TO SEATO, PARTICULARLY BY THE RTG. FOR THE DEPARTMENT'S INFORMATION, FORMER SEATO SEC GEN VARGAS, FOLLOWING HIS ASSUMPTION OF OFFICE, CALLED ON PRESIDENT JOHNSON IN 1966 AND AGAIN THE FOLLOWING YEAR ON THE OCCASION OF THE 12TH COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN WASHINGTON, D.C. THEY ALSO MET TWICE IN BANGKOK. VARGAS SUBSEQUENTLY MET WITH PRESIDENT NIXON IN BANGKOK IN 1969 AND THE FOLLOWING YEAR CALLED ON THE PRESIDENT AT THE WHITE HOUSE.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: I WOULD APPRECIATE A FAVORABLE REPLY ASAP IN ORDER THAT THE SEC GEN'S TRAVEL PLANS CAN BE COMPLETED.
UNGER

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